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To: <maamot@co.whatcom.wa.us>
CC: <bboxx@co.whatcom.wa.us>, <ken.mann@comcast.net>
Date: 9/15/2008 4:01 PM
Subject: Comments Foothills SEIS

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Matt Aamot
Senior Planner
Whatcom County
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, WA 98226

RE: Supplemental Foothills Subarea Plan (SEIS)

Dear Mr. Aamot:

Following are a few comments I wish to submit regarding the Supplemental Foothills Subarea Plan and its implementation.

Choice of Alternatives: I wish to express that I am strongly opposed to the adoption of Alternative 1 and Alternative 3. I would therefore vote for the adoption of Alternative 2 until such time as further work could be done to make further improvements to further address certain economic, transportation and rezoning issues. I also wish to restate my earlier concerns about the adoption of a new plan for the Foothills as follows:

Economics and Employment:

Although many comments were provided by the public regarding the need for employment and self sustainability issues, there remains little discussion in the SEIS of alternatives for improving regulations and zoning to encourage home based businesses in rural and ag designations, and renewable energy developments on private and Forest Lands.

The SIES does not adequately address the impact on property owners real estate or other taxes. We do not need our taxes increased. Since the tax impacts are not delineated, we must assume they will increase. Better to just drop drop the greater development alternatives.

Also, again I would be remiss if I did not remind the county that there is sufficient high head hydropower potential in the SubArea (that would cause no adverse impacts to fish or wildlife) to supply the entire County with "Green Power" for decades to come, and at a cost far less that which presently exists. The Plan fails to address the feasibility of this important energy and climate issue and its impact on county economics.

Transportation Issue:

The Mt. Baker Highway is in my opinion, already congested on weekends and during the ski season. Significant traffic increases will lead to the degradation of the "desired quality of life" of residents living in the area. Further, our taxes are too high already, we do not wish to have them increased through major new transportation projects, without associated benefit.

Recreation Issue: (Bay to Baker Trail:

Recently there has been an intensifying "push" to implement the proposed "Bay to Baker Trail", especially in the Maple Falls to Glacier segment. Why? The land owners adjacent to the trail are opposed (do a survey of each and every adjacent land owner!). We do not desire that trail on the proposed alignment for many reasons. Use, Theft, Security, Forest Fire, and Environmental and Engineering Feasibility Issues have not been addressed at all. The proposed alignment follows the North Fork of the River where it is actively eroding the river banks. The problem is far more than anyone seems to want to acknowledge. No further work or money should be spent on this project until Whatcom County Parks Department completes an engineering feasibility study and a rational cost estimate to construct and maintain that proposed alignment if it were to be completed. Further, alternative routes on the south side of the river should be evaluated and compared. the ideas suggesting that you can significantly alter or reduce peoples use of the automobile in this area, when you acknowledge the increased demand for obtaining services from the larger cities, is absurd. More absurd is the idea that bike trails such as the proposed Bay to Baker Trail will alleviate auto traffic on the roads.

Respectfully Submitted
William Devine